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Security Council

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Letter dated 8 September 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a report on the work of the Security Council during the presidency of Belgium in August 2008 (see annex). The document was prepared under my own responsibility, following consultations with other members of the Security Council. I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Jan **Grauls**
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Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations
in New York

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Annex to the letter dated 8 September 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Assessment of the work of the Security Council during the presidency of Belgium (August 2008)

Introduction

Under the presidency of Belgium, the Security Council held 22 meetings and 17 consultations of the whole, during which four resolutions and four presidential statements were adopted. The President also made two statements to the press on behalf of the Council.

Africa

Sierra Leone

On 4 August, the Council unanimously adopted, as a presidential text, resolution 1829 (2008), establishing a peacebuilding office in Sierra Leone for a period of 12 months, beginning on 1 October 2008, following the completion of the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone on 30 September 2008. The new office will be formally known as the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) and its creation had been recommended by the Secretary-General in his April report (S/2008/281). UNIPSIL will focus on supporting Government efforts in consolidating peace, notably by identifying and resolving tensions and threats of potential conflict; monitoring and promoting human rights, democratic institutions and the rule of law; consolidating good governance reforms; and supporting decentralization and a review of the 1991 Constitution.

Sudan

On 18 August, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and Head of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan, Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, briefed the Council on the Secretary-General's most recent report on the Sudan (S/2008/485). He informed the Council that the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, although behind schedule, remained on track. The cooperation between the two partners in the Agreement has shown signs of improvement. The Special Representative, however, also indicated to the Council that the foundation for a durable peace remains fragile. Ultimate success will require the parties to realize that peace can be consolidated only through the full implementation of the Abyei road map and the successful demarcation of the 1956 border. The Council continued the discussion on this subject during informal consultations of the whole.

On 26 August, the Council heard a briefing by the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Edmond Mulet, concerning the attack by Sudanese security forces on an internally displaced persons camp at Kalma, Southern Darfur. He informed the Council that the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) had been trying to gain complete access to the Kalma camp to

help evacuate the wounded. At the time of the briefing, UNAMID had not yet obtained full access, as Sudanese forces continued to surround the camp. The Assistant Secretary-General described these events as deeply disturbing, and reminded the Council that attacks against such camps were unacceptable, as would be the presence of arms inside the camps.

Somalia

On 19 August, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 1831 (2008), by which it authorized the extension of the mandate of the African Union Mission in Somalia for six more months. The Council authorized the Mission to take all necessary measures to carry out its mandate, as set out in resolution 1772 (2007), which focuses on providing security for key infrastructure and contributing to the creation of security conditions for the provision of humanitarian assistance.

On 26 August, during consultations of the whole, the Council was briefed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, on the peace process in Somalia. He informed the Council of a major positive development since the last report: on 19 August, the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia and the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia signed the Djibouti Agreement, which calls in particular for the cessation of armed confrontation and full humanitarian access. The briefing was followed by a presentation by the Chief of Staff in the Office of the Military Adviser, Colonel Ian Sinclair, on the security situation in Somalia, including an evaluation of the capacities necessary for an international stabilization force and the possible risks for a force that would not have the necessary capacities at its disposal. On the basis of that security briefing, the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations then made recommendations to the Council with regard to the possible deployment of an international stabilization force that the Somali parties requested in the Djibouti Agreement.

Burundi

On 26 August, the Council was briefed on the situation in Burundi by Ambassador Ulla Strőm, who spoke on behalf of Anders Lidén, Chairperson of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations. Mrs. Strőm informed the Council that the biannual review of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding on 23 June had resulted in concrete recommendations concerning the implementation of the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement between the Government and Palipehutu-FNL, security, justice and the promotion of the rule of law, land reform, socio-economic recovery and gender dimensions of peacebuilding. She was pleased to announce that Burundi had established a permanent national independent electoral commission, which would, with the continuing support of the Peacebuilding Commission, prepare for the 2010 elections. The Permanent Representative of Burundi, Augustin Nsanze, provided an assessment of the situation, informing the Council that a great deal had been accomplished in terms of good governance, but he underlined that Burundi, more than ever, needed the international community's support and understanding. He said that there were still problems concerning the strengthening of the capacities of the administration of justice, the functioning of an effective transitional justice system, the creation of an independent human rights commission, and the launching of the truth and reconciliation commission. The Council meeting

was followed by consultations of the whole. The members of the Council also adopted a statement to the press.

Asia

Iraq

On 19 August, the President of the Council began the meeting with a statement commemorating the fifth anniversary of the attack in Baghdad against the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), headed by the late Sergio Vieira de Mello.

On 6 August, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Lynn Pascoe, and the Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States, Alejandro Wolff, briefed the Council on the activities of UNAMI and the multinational force, respectively. The Council had before it the latest report of the Secretary-General on UNAMI (S/2008/495) describing the contribution of political and military efforts to improved security in most parts of the country. The Under-Secretary-General gave an outline of recent developments, warned all actors against complacency, and stressed the need to focus on building trust and confidence across community lines to improve the quality of life for all Iraqis. In line with its mandate, UNAMI continues to focus on advancing political dialogue and national reconciliation, resolving disputed internal boundaries, preparing for provincial elections, supporting the reconstruction and development of Iraq, and alleviating the suffering of Iraqi refugees, internally displaced persons and other vulnerable groups.

On 7 August, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 1830 (2008), by which it extended the mandate of UNAMI for another period of 12 months, in accordance with the request of the Government of Iraq and as stipulated in resolution 1770 (2007). Recognizing that the security of United Nations personnel was essential for UNAMI to carry out its work, the Council called on the Government of Iraq and other Member States to continue to provide security and logistical support to the United Nations presence in the country. The Council welcomed the contributions of Member States in providing UNAMI with the financial, logistical and security resources and support it needed to fulfil its mission. The Council requested the Secretary-General to report quarterly on progress made towards the fulfilment of all the Mission's responsibilities.

Middle East

On 20 August, the Council heard a briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, which was followed by consultations of the whole. The Under-Secretary-General informed the Council that Israeli-Palestinian negotiations as part of the Annapolis process were continuing, that the fragile ceasefire between Israel and Hamas had been largely respected, but that the situation on the ground remained a cause for concern, particularly the continuing settlement activity across the West Bank and in East Jerusalem, and the rise of internal Palestinian violence. The organization in September of a meeting of the Quartet, followed by an *iftar* with Arab partners, and a meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee will provide occasions to take stock of the progress made and to assist in the implementation of donor pledges to address the impending Palestinian budget crisis. Concerning

Lebanon, the past month had been marked positively by the Parliamentary vote of confidence on the Cabinet's ministerial declaration and the bilateral commitments made by President Suleiman and President Assad in Damascus, including the establishment of diplomatic relations.

These positive developments were, however, overshadowed by security incidents which continued in and around the northern city of Tripoli. The Under-Secretary-General concluded by reaffirming the Secretary-General's commitment to a just and lasting comprehensive regional peace in the Middle East, based on Security Council resolutions. The meeting was followed by consultations of the whole.

Lebanon

On 25 August, a closed meeting was held with countries contributing troops to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). The Council and the troop-contributing countries heard a briefing by the Director of the Asia and Middle East Division of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Wolfgang Weisbrod-Weber. Members of the Council, the Director and representatives of participating troop-contributing countries had an exchange of views.

On 27 August, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 1832 (2008), extending the mandate of UNIFIL until 31 August 2009, as recommended by the Secretary-General (S/2008/568) and requested by the Government of Lebanon. The Council asked all parties concerned to respect the cessation of hostilities, the Blue Line in its entirety, and the safety of UNIFIL and other United Nations personnel. The Council requested full cooperation to achieve the permanent ceasefire and the long-term solution envisioned in resolution 1701 (2006). The representatives of Israel and Lebanon participated in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda.

Timor-Leste

On 19 August, the Council was briefed during a debate by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Timor-Leste and Head of the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), Atul Khare, who presented the fourth report of the Secretary-General, covering the period from 8 January to 8 July 2008 (S/2008/501). He complimented the Timorese authorities on their successful efforts to maintain security and stability, reviewed the progress made to date and highlighted the fact that the Timorese authorities had identified the need to address management gaps in the civil service, police and army as key priorities.

In a statement to the Council, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Timor-Leste, Zacarias Albano da Costa, indicated that the Government appreciated the efforts of the UNMIT police and envisaged that the resumption of policing responsibilities by the national police would be completed within the first half of 2009. The Minister hoped that a robust United Nations police presence would be maintained through and beyond the current UNMIT mandate. During the debate, the Council also heard statements by the representatives of the Philippines, Japan, Brazil, New Zealand, Australia, Malaysia and Portugal.

The Council subsequently met in informal consultations. The Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2008/29) in which it, inter alia, reaffirmed the

continued importance of the review and reform of the security sector in Timor-Leste, recognized efforts made by the national authorities and UNMIT for the reconstitution of the national police, underlined that building an independent, professional and impartial national police service was a long-term process, and reaffirmed the importance of ongoing efforts to reach accountability and justice, including the implementation by the Government of Timor-Leste of the recommendations of the United Nations Special Commission of Inquiry of 2006.

Afghanistan

On 26 August, the Council heard a briefing by the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations on an incident that occurred in Azizabad, Herat Province, Afghanistan, on 22 August 2008, which reportedly caused civilian casualties. Owing to the recent nature of the events, the information provided, based on reports from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, was still incomplete. The Assistant Secretary-General insisted that the safety and welfare of civilians must be considered above all else during the planning and conduct of military operations.

Europe

Georgia

On 7 August, at the request of the Russian Federation, the Council convened consultations of the whole on the situation in the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict zone. The Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation presented a draft statement to the press.

On 8 August, the Council held a debate in response to a letter dated 7 August 2008 from the Representative of the Russian Federation (S/2008/533). The representative of Georgia submitted two letters (S/2008/534 and S/2008/535). In their interventions, members of the Council expressed their concern at events in the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict zone and appealed to the parties for an immediate cessation of hostilities.

On 8 August, a second debate was held by the Council in response to a letter of the same date from the representative of Georgia (S/2008/536) on the situation in Georgia. The Permanent Representative of Finland, in her capacity as representative of the Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Permanent Representative of Georgia participated in the debate. In their interventions, members of the Council expressed their deep concern about the deteriorating situation in the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict zone and appealed to all parties concerned for restraint and an immediate cessation of hostilities.

On 9 August, the Council held consultations of the whole concerning the situation in Georgia. The Council heard a briefing by the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations on the situation in Georgia, and in particular on the situation in and around the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict zone. Council members exchanged views on how to ensure that an immediate cessation of hostilities could be achieved.

On 10 August, the Council held a debate in response to a letter of the same date from the representative of the United States of America on the situation in

Georgia (S/2008/538). The Permanent Representative of Georgia participated in the debate. The Council heard briefings by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs on the situation in Georgia and the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations on the situation in and around the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict zone. In their interventions, Council members reiterated the urgent need for an immediate cessation of hostilities. Several members reaffirmed their attachment to the territorial integrity of Georgia.

On 11 August, the Council held a private debate in response to a letter of the same date from the representative of Georgia (S/2008/540). The Permanent Representative of Georgia participated in the private debate. The Council heard briefings by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs on the situation in Georgia and by the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations on the situation in and around the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict zone. The members of the Council had an exchange of views on how to arrive at a ceasefire.

On 19 August, the Council held a debate in response to a letter of the same date from the representative of France (S/2008/561). The Council heard briefings by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs on the situation in Georgia and by the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations on the situation in the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict zone. The representative of France announced the circulation of a draft resolution. Members of the Council discussed ways to ensure the implementation by all the parties concerned of the six-point plan brokered between the President of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, on behalf of the European Union, and the President of the Russian Federation, Dmitry A. Medvedev. Several members welcomed the circulation of a draft resolution.

On 21 August, the Council held consultations of the whole at the request of the Russian Federation. The Council heard briefings by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs on the situation in Georgia and the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations on the situation in the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict zone. The Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation announced that its draft resolution was being circulated in provisional form. Members of the Council had an exchange of views on the draft resolution.

On 28 August, the Council held consultations of the whole in response to a letter dated 27 August from the representative of Georgia (S/2008/587). In the afternoon the Council heard briefings by the Director of the Americas and Europe Division and Officer-in-Charge of the Department of Political Affairs, Elizabeth Spehar, on the situation in Georgia and by the Director of the Asia and Middle East Division and Officer-in-Charge of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Wolfgang Weisbrod-Weber, on the situation in and around the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict zone. The Permanent Representative of Georgia participated in the debate. Council members had an exchange of views on the situation in Georgia, specifically on the issue of the recognition by the Russian Federation of Abkhazia's and South Ossetia's independence.

Thematic issues

Peace and security in Africa

On 19 August, the Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2008/30), in which it condemned the Mauritanian military's overthrow on 6 August of the democratically elected Government of Mauritania and welcomed the statements condemning the coup by the African Union, the European Union and other members of the international community. The Council demanded the immediate release of President Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi and the restoration of the legitimate constitutional, democratic institutions immediately. The Council decided to monitor further developments.

Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts

On 13 August, the members of the Council agreed on a statement to the press, condemning in the strongest terms the terrorist attack in the Lebanese town of Tripoli on 13 August, which caused numerous deaths and injuries, including to members of the Lebanese Armed Forces. The Council underlined the need for all States to bring perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of the reprehensible act of terrorism to justice, in accordance with obligations under international law and resolution 1373 (2001) and consistent with resolution 1624 (2005). The Council recalled the need to put an end to impunity in Lebanon and emphasized the importance of the unity of all the Lebanese people.

On 19 August, the Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2008/31), in which it condemned in the strongest terms the terrorist suicide attack that occurred in Issers, Algeria, on 19 August. The Council underlined the need to bring perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of the reprehensible act of terrorism to justice and urged all States, in accordance with their obligations under international law and resolution 1373 (2001) and consistent with resolution 1624 (2005), to cooperate with the Algerian authorities to combat, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts.

On 21 August, the Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2008/32), in which it condemned in the strongest terms the twin suicide terrorist attacks that occurred in Wah Cantt, Pakistan, on the same day. The Council underlined the need to bring perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of the reprehensible act of terrorism to justice and urged all States, in accordance with their obligations under international law and resolution 1373 (2001) and consistent with resolution 1624 (2005), to cooperate with the Pakistani authorities to combat, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts.

Security Council resolution 1244 (1999)

On 6 August, during consultations of the whole, Council members were briefed by the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations on the findings of the investigation into the events that occurred on 17 March in Mitrovica, Kosovo. The investigation, conducted by Francis Ssekandi, focused on evaluating the actions of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). The investigation report confirms that UNMIK acted within its mandate

to regain control of the courthouse, but that the actions taken by UNMIK towards the demonstrators in the weeks leading up to 17 March lacked balance as well as appreciation of the political and legal implications of the use of force. Council members had an exchange of views on the issue.

Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004)

On 18 August, the Council heard a briefing by the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), Jorge Urbina. The report of the Committee submitted to the Council (S/2008/493) noted the progress achieved thanks to the Committee and its group of experts. The report also demonstrated the scale of the task that remains to be performed.

Other matters

Implementation of the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2006/507)

On 27 August an open debate was held on the working methods of the Council in response to a letter dated 4 August 2008 from the representative of Belgium to the Secretary-General transmitting a concept paper (S/2008/528). The concept paper stated that the purpose of the debate was to assess the implementation of the measures set out in the note by the President (S/2006/507), identifying the improvements achieved while simultaneously stressing the challenges that still needed to be tackled. The debate was organized at the request of Costa Rica, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Singapore and Switzerland (the S-5 group) (see S/2008/418). The Secretary-General stated that it was essential for the Security Council to keep addressing issues related to its working methods, owing to its increasingly complex responsibilities and a growing array of new challenges in the maintenance of international peace and security. The debate, in which 47 countries actively participated, focused on making the Security Council more efficient, effective, transparent, accountable and accessible. Many speakers reiterated the need for finding the right balance between these topics and noted the role of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions in further improving the working methods of the Security Council.